



# **2018 CASEWORK REPORT**

**Rep. Pramila Jayapal | Washington's 7th Congressional District**

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# What We Do

Constituent services are a crucial part of the work of Congresswoman Jayapal and her staff. Caseworkers help constituents with problems or requests they may have with federal agencies. The 2018 casework report highlights stories of some of the constituents Jayapal's office has helped.

Our office has helped **more than 760 constituents** in the 7th Congressional District, **saving them \$1,542,255.72 to date.**

Caseworkers handle Social Security problems, federal disability filings, Internal Revenue Service difficulties, immigration issues, tuition problems, veterans' benefits, and assist constituents with visas, citizenship and employment.

Caseworkers work with the appropriate federal agencies to resolve these issues. Congressional inquiries help to expedite and provide additional insight into ongoing cases that constituents have with federal agencies. Members of Congress cannot force an agency to expedite a case or act preferentially, nor can they assist individuals in judicial matters, provide legal advice, or recommend an attorney. We can, however, facilitate the administrative processes, cut through red tape and advocate for a favorable outcome. At times, we express judgment regarding a constituent case or ask for reconsideration if it is believed that the agency's decision is not supported by established law, regulations, or policy.

Constituents in need of assistance are encouraged to contact the Seattle office by **calling 206-674-0040** or going to Congresswoman Jayapal's website at <https://jayapal.house.gov/services>.

In the following testimonials, some pseudonyms are used to protect privacy.

# Casework testimonials

## Business

Connie Gersberg

*“I believe that the result of your inquiry on behalf of your constituents saved the jobs of over 25 Metro employees, a Ballard-based company, and a monthly payroll of over \$100,000. It also preserved a growing woman-owned business that is establishing itself in the local construction community as a reliable go-to firm for high quality coating applications. We believe that your office’s inquiry into this matter was crucial in breaking the log jam in payments.”*

Our office assisted in obtaining payment from a general contractor, Clark Construction, on long overdue invoices at the new VA Mental Health Facility. The amount was received 6 days after they contacted our office in the amount of \$387,094.

John Pauli

Our office helped John Pauli’s veteran-owned, small aerospace manufacturing business that has been supporting the U.S. Military, Boeing and others for 27 years. The IRS had levied a penalty of 999.95 dollars for an accused failure to submit a W-2 form in 2014. This turned out to be an inaccurate and unsubstantiated fine. We were able to get this resolved for him in a timely manner, to his great relief.

## Social Security and Health care

Jane

*“Thank you for responding to my call for help in trying to navigate Part D Medicare insurance to get coverage for my husband’s chemotherapy. Your kindness, expertise, and willingness to work quickly has made a difficult and scary time so much easier for us. I want you to know how much we appreciate all you have done for us in the past weeks. You and Congresswoman Jayapal have restored my faith that our system still works and that we can all live better lives when we support one another.”*

We assisted a constituent in extending her husband’s Medicare coverage to include his chemotherapy treatment. Through the help of our office, the cost of his chemotherapy was reduced from \$11,800 per month to \$540 per month. Both constituents are now fully covered by Medicare Part D, and will continue to receive their coverage for as long as they need it. Additionally, our constituent is reacting extremely well to the chemo, making the affordability of this kind of health care – and the access to programs like Medicare – more valuable.

## Trina and Peter

Our office successfully negotiated a 60-day extension in Social Security benefits for two elderly Russian refugees. They had come to the United States from the Soviet Union and fled due to religious persecution. They have been living in Seattle for almost 25 years, and after a stressful redetermination interview in February, were told that all of their benefits would be cut. These payments were critical for their healthcare coverage, with issues ranging from Alzheimer's disease to multiple open heart surgeries. Social Security had been adamant that their coverage would end by an April 2018 deadline, but we were able to facilitate a 60-day extension to give the family enough time to collect their paperwork. Due to our office's intervention, the payments resumed as normal following the extension.

## Janie McDermott

Social Security made an error on how much Janie McDermott, who is blind and deaf, was owed. Our inquiry resulted in an authorization for reconsideration, resulting in \$162,000 in payments to be disbursed.

## Veterans' Affairs

### Doug Wheems

*“I was experiencing difficulties receiving the health care I needed, so I reached out to Representative Jayapal’s office. Raman was very helpful and insightful and was able to help me accomplish the things I needed to receive the care and win my case, as far as my benefits were concerned. It was a difficult and trying event for me to go through.”*

Doug Wheems is a Marine Corps. veteran who moved to Seattle to seek assistance for his VA issues. His cancer was related to his military service and he had been seeking a claim for years. He contacted our office in February of 2018, and by the end of March, as a result of our inquiries, he was awarded more than \$80,000. Mr. Wheems and his partner were living in their car at the time; they used the funds to secure housing.

### William Winship

William Winship, a Vietnam war paratrooper, had been trying for years to obtain backpay due to a back-related injury he received while on duty. Through our office’s assistance, he was able to obtain medical and military records and resubmit a claim. The claim was approved and he shared with us that he was awarded \$36,000 in backpay.

## Joshua Wetzel

Joshua Wetzel was referred to our office by a local community leader. Within one week of contacting our office, we helped him find housing by connecting him with housing-supportive services. Mr. Wetzel had served over ten years in the military, including tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Missing some forms, he asked us for assistance obtaining his medals. We inquired with Veterans' Affairs and were able to deliver his medals to him within the month.



# Immigration

Nearly one-third of the cases we handle are related to U.S. Customs and Immigrations Services. Of these, more than one-third relate to a constituent's status for employment, and **93.6% of these cases** resulted in **favorable outcomes** for constituents.

## Sunny

*"I was struggling to get an Non-Immigrant Highly Skilled Professionals (H1B) visa in order to start my faculty job at the University of Washington, Tacoma. Congresswoman Jayapal's office was very helpful... helping me figure out the situation and all the possible solutions, and contacting the USCIS. I am very, very grateful for the Congresswoman and everyone in the office. The experience makes me believe that our government can really support immigrants as well as people who are in need."*

## Sandy

*"I could not have resolved this issue without the amazing support your office provided. Ms. Mohamed was very compassionate and extremely supportive. I am glad to have found such a wonderful person to help me resolve my issue. Your office has strengthened my belief in the system."*

Sandy applied for an Optional Practical Training (OPT) two-year extension and arranged for her family to meet her in the U.S., pulling her daughter out of school and making arrangements for her husband's job. As part of this process, she

unenrolled her daughter from school in her home country, and made arrangements for her husband to be able to work from the U.S. Her extension application was rejected by USCIS as a result of a returned check. Her second application was also denied due to delivery delays.

Sandy came into the office in tears, terrified that she would be forced to leave the U.S. immediately. After evaluating the case, staff wrote a letter of due consideration, asking USCIS to reconsider using their discretionary power. Because of our work and the collection of supporting documents, USCIS reopened and approved Sandy's case, granting her OPT extension ten days before she would have needed to leave the U.S. to avoid unlawful presence.

## Wooda and Oren

*“My wife and I needed assistance getting my Employment Authorization Document (I-765). After several weeks of working with Congresswoman Jayapal’s immigration caseworker, we received a notification from USCIS that our cards had been approved and were in production. We cannot thank Congresswoman Jayapal enough for all the help and support. We really appreciate everything you did. As immigrants to the United States, the immigration process has been so overwhelming for us, and the fact that your office really cared and helped is something we didn't expect and was not obvious to us. Thank you again for everything!”*

## Suraj

*“Congresswoman Jayapal’s office worked with USCIS to send me my Employment Authorization Document (I-765). Overall, I am very happy with the help the immigration caseworker provided, and the proactive steps she took to help me receive my EAD card, including drafting a letter to submit to my company. Due to her efforts, I received my card and I am able to continue working at my company.”*

## Derek

Derek contacted our office for assistance with his work permit and advance parole travel document. Under recently changed USCIS regulations, individuals could no longer travel outside the U.S. while in the process of renewing documentation, even if they hold valid documentation. Derek could not even travel to his country of citizenship. Our office facilitated the collection of documents attesting to the financial loss to Derek and to his company of this rule change, and successfully assisted the expedited approval and delivery of his travel permit. Without our office’s intervention, this change would have cost Derek \$130,000 in missed business trips, an overall financial loss of \$200,000 for his employer.

## Other

### Zim Harry

*“My mom was on the island of Dominica as Hurricane Maria passed through. It was a category 5 storm... We called the State Department and embassies to try to get in touch with her. There was a lot of red tape. We ended up having the idea of talking with Congresswoman Jayapal's office and they were amazing. They provided us with a sense of compassion we weren't able to get anywhere else.... we were able to get in contact and she was found unharmed. I think your office had pushed so hard that they sent our a rescue team to find her. I'm an ordinary person and I didn't think a Congressional office would help a person like me, but I was wrong. These offices are for everybody. The heavens were moved to help my mom and it's because of this office, and we're profoundly appreciative of the work this office did.”*

### Janie McDermott

Social Security made an error on how much Janie McDermott, who is blind and deaf, was owed. Our inquiry resulted in an authorization for reconsideration which was approved, resulting in \$162,000 in payments to be disbursed.

## Cassidy Watt

Cassidy is a long-term Washington resident who was erroneously charged over \$12,000 in out-of-state tuition. Through our office's efforts, by contacting the governor's office and University of Washington financial office, we were able to secure a full refund for her.

## Jerry

A constituent contacted our office regarding the seizure of a flask he had purchased at an antique auction in New York City. The flask had been erroneously flagged as a potentially stolen antiquity by the New York City Department of Justice. He had been attempting for more than two years to recover the flask. Due to our office's intervention with the relevant agencies, the flask was released to him. The flask has a retail value of approximately \$250,000.

## Need Help?

Please contact us if you're having problems with Social Security, Medicare, veterans or military affairs, immigration, passports, or other issues involving a federal government agency.

Agency assistance is a two-step process:

1. Fill out the form below to contact our office. Please provide all contact information, any ☐ relevant identification or case numbers, and as much relevant information as possible so ☐ that we may quickly respond to your request. ☐
2. The Federal Privacy Act requires us to have your written permission before we contact ☐ government agencies on your behalf or discuss your case in detail. In addition to filling out the form below, please also download and fill out our Privacy Act Waiver form. If your issue is about immigration, please fill out this form instead of the Privacy Act Waiver form. ☐

Once your form is filled out and signed (the law requires your original signature), please mail to our Seattle office at:

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal 1904 3rd Ave Suite 510 Seattle WA 98101

When we receive your completed form, we will open a case file and keep you informed of our progress.

If you are not a resident of the Seventh Congressional District, please contact your representatives. We will forward requests from residents of other districts to their representatives, but that may delay a response to your inquiry.